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Adv. American Lit.

*Conclude why Tim O’Brien brings up multiple times who the Vietnamese man was.*

In the book *The Things They Carried* by Tim O’Brien, the author, while writing about the man he killed, repeatedly mentions the Vietnamese man was just a mathematician; the author does this to exemplify the guilt he felt after killing him. While staring at the man’s lifeless corpse, O’Brien is thinking about who the man was: “[D]espite his family’s poverty, the man I killed would have been determined to continue his education in mathematics” (128). In this scene, O’Brien clearly feels guilty about killing him. By thinking the man would have gone on to further his education, O’Brien is implying he destroyed the life of a man with great potential. This fact makes O’Brien feel guiltier. Another reason O’Brien is so guilt ridden is that he can relate to the Vietnamese man. Like himself, the man he killed was pulled away from his life plans. Like himself, the man he killed was in the war to avoid shame. Like himself, the man he killed was a scholar, not a soldier. It was as if O’Brien had killed himself. It is because of this that O’Brien is so guilt ridden at killing the Vietnamese man.